Hon. Members are aware that the State Government have ordered a judicial inquiry into this tragic incident and we hope that the causes thereof would be fully probed and all possible steps would be taken to prevent the reoccurrence of such a tragedy.

May I request the hon. Members to stand in their seats and observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect to the memory of those who lost their lives in these tragic circumstances.

[*Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute*].

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR. CHAIRMAN: We shall now take up Questions. Question No. 1.

Sick public sector units

*1. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under consideration of Government to merge the sick public sector units with the healthy ones and the setting up of holding companies with the units operating on similar production lines;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether other proposals to restore health to sick public sector units are also being examined by Government; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) There is no proposal at present to merge sick public sector units with healthy ones. The feasibility of forming holding companies in certain sectors is under examination of Government.

(c) and (d) Government is constantly endeavouring to restore health to sick public sector units. The steps taken in this direction include, *inter-alia*, regular monitoring of performance, arrangements for capitve generation of power wherever considered feasible, investment in balancing facilities, upgradation of technology, modernisation and rehabilitation of plants, product diversification, training and retraining of personnel, adoption of various cost control and cost reduction measures and encouragement of workers participation in management.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, when I put this question, I specifically expected from the Minister of Industries to state what specific steps have been taken in regard to the large number of sick industries. The number has been very large, Sir, and whenever these questions are raised, both inside and outside the Parliament, immediately such things are stated as the one which was stated by the Labour Minister in April 1985. He said that they would be appointing a tripartite committee to go into the indusrial sickness and lock-outs. But, unfortunately, no decision has been taken since then, and it only shows that the Government of India is not seriously considering the industrial sickness which is affecting the production. In view of this, I would like to ask the Minister for Industries as to what specific steps, either his Ministry or the Ministry of Labour, is taking to appoint a committee which can go into the industrial sickness and thereby save the country from the malady which has bten there for quite long.

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI: Sir, as the hon. Member is aware, the public sector units which can come under the category of sickness as being sick industries are being administered by different Ministries, and all the concerned departments very closely monitor the performance all the enterprises under their control. Quarterly performance reviews are taken and Ministers in charge of the respective departments also have been frequently taking steps to improve the functioning of the units. The Government at the

highest level—even the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, and the Cabinet itself at the highest level—reviews the performance of public enterprises and also discusses the difficulties regarding providing infra-structural facilitiese, transportation, power and coal so that proper linkages are established to alleviate sickness. Indepth study of enterprises is also made continuously for all such units which show poor performance. Expert study groups have been appointed and eminent consultants consulted by the different Ministries to go into the detailed working of these enterprises. The Ministries concerned have also taken steps to improve the selection and appraisal of top management personnel as well as timely filling up of top posts. Increasing of labour productivity by provision of incentives and adoption of participative style of management is also being considered and implemented in many of these undertakings. Steps are being taken for development of operating skills by training, and improvement of industrial relations and managerial efficiency. These steps are also being taken. Procedures for timely completion of major projects under construction are also being streamlined. Diversification of product-mix is also being considered wherever it is possible. To meet power shortages in specific sectors, provision of captive power plants and balancing facilities are being made. Modernisation, rehabilitation of plants and R&D efforts are also being made because modernisation and technological upgradation is also a must to met sickness in some of the units. Since all these measures are being taken by different Ministries, it would not be possible for me to give all the details. If the hon. Member wants any specific details regarding any specific public sector, I would appreciate if he can frame further questions. As far as this Committee being set up by the Labour Ministry is concerned, I will ask my colleague, the hon. Labour Minister, to look into it expeditiously.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Ministers reply has been one of the exercises in futility because he said that efforts are being made to get things examined by expert committees, etc. But when the expert committees examine and give reports, they only gather dust. In this connection, I would like to ask him as to what has been done by the Ministry to appoint a Board of Public Enterprises as recommended by an Expert Committee which was appointed by the Ministry itself. Therefore ,Sir, it is simply fooling anybody to say that all the steps have been taken, upgradation is taking place, modernisation is taking place and experts are looking into it. At the same time, when certain suggestions are made to the Ministry, they don't act on them. It only proves that they are meant only to be an eyewash and nothing more. Therefore, I would like to ask the hon. Minister for Industry as to what is the point of delay in appointing a Board of Public Enterprises which can look into the problems of industrial sickness and suggest ways and means by which the industrial health of the country could be improved. What is the specific delay

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI: Sir, I am not aware of any suggestion or recommendation for the creation of a Board of Public Enterprises to deal with industrial sickness. There has been a recommendation to set up a Board as a Policy Advisory Board and this is under consideration. The Bureau of Public Enterprises is already there to study policy matters and to formulate policy guidelines regarding wages and other matters Within this Bureau of Public Enterprises, there is a recommendation with respect to a Committee on Public Enterprises wherein the top functionaries of some of the selected public sector undertakings could be there to advise the Bureau of Public Enterprises on policy matters. This is under consideration.

श्री सत्यपाल मलिक : श्रीमन, पब्लिक सेक्टर यूनिट्स ठीक से न चलना न कि देश के लिए जो आर्थिक व्यवस्था है उसके लिए जरूरी है बल्कि जो हमारे संविधान में या जो सरकारी पार्टी की घोषणा है उसके लिहाज से भी इनका कामयाब होना जरूरी है । लेकिन हो यह रहा है कि ये जो पब्लिक यूनिट्स खिल गई हैं तो मिस मेनेजमेंट हो या गलती यूनिट जो चला रहे हैं उनकी होती है, नतीजा यह होता है कि इसकी वजह से दाम बढ़ते हैं और सारी

अर्थ-व्यवस्था पर इसका असर पड़ता है । पिछले साल जब सरकार ने यह कहा था कि जो प्राइवेट सैक्टर की यूनिट सिक होंगी, इसके लिये जो जिम्मेदार मालिक लोग हैं, जो बंगलिंग करते हैं उनके खिलाफ एक्शन होगा तो इस संदर्भ में क्या सरकार ने यह जानने की कोशिश की है कि सिकनेस के वेरियस कारण क्या हैं और उनकी जिम्मेदारी क्या किन्हीं मैनेजमेंट के लोगों पर ठहराई गई है और अगर ठहराई गई है तो उन लोगों को क्या सजायें दी गई हैं, यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं ?

श्री नारायण दत्त तिवारी : श्रीमन्, मैं सम्मानित सदस्य से पूर्णतया सहमत हूं कि सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के प्रतिष्ठानों का सुप्रबन्ध हर दृष्टिकोण से अपना महत्व रखता है, और इस बात का पूरा प्रयास होना चाहिए कि ये सार्वजनिक प्रतिष्ठान रुग्ण न हों । लेकिन, माननीय सदस्य इस बात से सहमत होंगे कि एक कठिनाई तब आती है जब कि हमें ऐसे सार्वजनिक प्रतिष्ठान का प्रबंध करने को मिलता है जो पहले से ही बीमार थे, रुग्ण थे । श्रीमा, आप अवगत हैं कि लगभग चालीस ऐसी अलग अलग इकाइयां हैं, आज सार्वजनिक प्रतिष्ठानों की, जो पहले व्यक्तिगत क्षेत्र में बीमार थी और मजदूरों के हित में, श्रमिकों के हित में और उत्पादन के हित में शासन को इस सदन के निवेदन पर, इस सदन की आज्ञा पर उनको लेना पड़ा । ये प्राइवेट सेक्टर से ली हुई मिलें हैं जो बीमा रुग्ण थी और इनमें आज बहुत इन्वेस्टमेंट की आवश्यकता है, इनमें विनियोजन की आवश्यकता है ताकि वे सुचारू रूप से चलाई जा सकें । ऐसी बीमार मिलें जिनका प्रबंध शासन के हाथ में है उनके प्रबंध में कई कठिनाइयां हैं जिनमें सबसे अधिक कठिनाई वित्तीय साधनों की है और आधुनिकीकरण की है, माडर्नाइजेशन की है । जहां तक यह प्रश्न है कि इनमें जो प्रबंधकीय त्रुटियां हैं उनके दायित्व का निर्वहन करने में जो असफलता रही है तो ऐसी असफलता को लिखिबद्ध करके किसी को उत्तरदाई ठहराने का सुझाव जो माननीय सदस्य ने दिया है यह उचित है । विभिन्न मंत्रालय इस संबंध में गतिशील रहे हैं और वे इस संबंध में आवश्यकतानुसार कार्यवाही करते रहे हैं ।

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Sir, maladministration and lack of effective control are also the factors contributing to the sickness of these public sector units. And all these remedial measures which the hon. Minister has listed would be infructuous if there is no effective administration and control. And several top posts in the public sector are living vacant for months and years together. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to how many public sector units are today topless and when they are likely to be filled in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question not relevant.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Why, Sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because it relates to merger and not management.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: That is one of the reasons leading to sickness. (*Interruptions*) If he has got the answer, let him answer, or let him ask for notice because he himself has said last time...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question does not relate to the main question. Now, Shri Chitta Basu.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the fact that the Prime Minister just on 8th April last convened a meeting of the Central trade unions to discuss over the problem of sickness, and whether it is also a fact that suggestions from the side of the Central unions were made to the effect that there should be a joint apex body consisting of the representatives of the workers, that is, the Central trade unions and the management of these public sector units, and if so, whether any further step has been taken in that regard in view of the fact that workers' participation in this matter is of crucial importance as admitted by the hon. Minister himself in his statement?

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI: Sir, I am certainly aware of the consultations made by the hon. Prime Minister

with the leadership of the Central trade unions as also with the industrialists and the public sector management on 8th April. Many of the suggestions that have been made are under consideration. As the hon. Member himself has mentioned, it was only on April 8, only 12 days back, that these suggestions were made. I fully agree with him that the involvement of all Central trade unions and trade unions in each public sector unit is very important to ensure productivity, quality and purposiveness of modernisation and all other relevant factors which go to mark a unit viable and we will certainly take all possible steps that are necessary. I am meeting the Central Advisory Board of industries day after tomorrow *i.e.* on the 25th, wherein the Central trade unions will also be represented as also many representatives of the industry as a whole. I think the Central Advisory Board also would be a very good forum to consider these issues.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO: Sir, the replies to part (a) and part (b) of the question seem to be contradictory. The question was whether there is any proposal under the consideration of the Government to merge the sick public sector units with healthy ones, and me reply that was given was that there is no proposal to merge sick public sector units. The second part, however, says that the feasibility of forming holding companies in certain sectors is under examination. Constitution of these holding companies should only be considered in the context of the question. We can have a holding company for healthy units also. But in the context of the question put by Prof. Lakshmanna, a holding company can be formed with respect to sick units. Hence the reply of the Minister to this part of the question seems to be contradictory. Does the Minister rule out any possibilty of merger of sick units with healthy ones or is it only the present thinking, or in future also the same line of action will be taken?

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI: May I assure the hon. Member that there is no contradiction if he very carefully applies his very incisive mind to the question itself, the wording of the question. First of all, I have said that there is no proposal; I have said that there is no proposal at present. That is number one. Secondly, I know that the hon Member knows the Company Law and according to section 4 of the Companies Act, wherein they have defined the holding company, the definition itself shows that once you form the holding company it does not mean that the separate identity of the subsidiary company is lost. The subsidiary company is there as a unit, but holding company is only a holding unit, which has more than 51 per cent shares of the company. So, holding company is a well-known concept throughout the world. So, it retains the identity of subsidiary company and the holding company controls the affairs of the subsidiary company by virtue of the fact that the whole or majority of shareholding of the subsidiary company are that of the holding company but that does not desist from accountability of the subsidiary company to its shareholders or to the general public or to the nation.

SHRI M. KADHARSHA: Sir, a huge amount of Rs. 36 thousand crores of peoples money is invested in the public sector undertakings. But unfortunately, most of these units are proving white elephants to the Government exchequer. Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how many of these public sector undertakings are earning appropriate rates of return . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. Next, Mr. Vaghela. (*Interruptions*). You must put a question relevant to merger of public sector units. I have given you the opportunity.

SHRI M. KADHARSHA: May I know from the hon. Minister whether Mr. Arjun Sen-Gupta's report has been received by the Government and, if so, what decision has been taken by the Government to implement the recommendations of the Committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the Minister answering this question?

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI: Arjun Sen Gupta Committee's report has been considered in major respects by the Government and it is under consideration that two holding companies under the erstwhile Heavy Industry Department be set up. That is under consideration.

श्री शंकर सिंह वाघेला : चेयरमैन साहब, प्राइवेट सेक्टर में जो यूनिट सिक होती हैं उनका ओनर कभी सिक नहीं होता है वह हेल्दी बनता है और जो हमारे नेशनलाइज्ड बैंक्स ने उनको पैसा दिया है उस पैसे को ले कर के कोई यूनिट सिक होता है । ऐसे ही पब्लिक सेक्टर में बने हुए चेयरमैन और मैनेजिंग डाइरेक्टर जिनको हमारी सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट ही अपाइंटमेंट देती है, वह पांच, सात या दस साल तक एक ही पद पर बने रहते हैं । तो इसमें क्या आप यह आश्वासन देंगे कि इनको तीन साल के बाद तबादला करेंगे और इनकी जब अपाइंटमेंट होती है तब इनकी क्या मिल्कीयत थी और उसके बाद अब क्या मिल्कियत है ?

अब सिक यूनिट्स को हेल्दी करने का आपके पास इंजेक्शन है प्राइस राइज का--प्राइस राईज कर दिया । उसके प्रोडक्शन को तो आप देखते नहीं कि वह क्या है । प्राइस राइज से यूनिट्स हेल्दी बनता है क्या ? तो ऐसे अफसरों के ऊपर यह जिम्मेदारी देने के लिए गवर्नमेंट क्या सोचती है ? तीन साल के बाद उनका तबादला किया जाए इसके बारे में आप क्या सोचते हैं ?

श्री नारायण दत्त तिवारी : श्रीमन्, माननीय सदस्य ने जो एक आधारभूत प्रश्न उठाया है, वह किसी भी सार्वजनिक प्रतिष्ठान के मुख्य प्रबंधक से सम्बंधित है ।

श्रीमन्, माननीय सादस्य इससे सहमत होंगे कि सार्वजनिक प्रतिष्ठान कोई सरकारी विभाग नहीं है जिसमें कि हम उनका स्थानान्तरण एक विभाग से दूसरे विभाग में कर सकें, या उसी विभाग में अंतर-विभागीय हम स्थानान्तरण कर सकें । वह अपने से एक स्वतंत्र इकाई है और, श्रीमन् कई बार यह भी संस्तुति इस सम्मानीय सदन की हुई है कि हमें एक न्यूनतम स्वतंत्रता देनी चाहिए जिससे कि वह अपनी इकाई के प्रबंध को सुचारू रूप से चला सकें और दिन-प्रतिदिन का किसी प्रकार का व्यवधान या हस्तक्षेप उसमें नहीं होना चाहिए । इस सदन की कई सम्मानीय समितियों की भी यह संस्तुति रही है ।

तो, श्रीमन्, हमें संतुलन स्थापित करना पड़ता है कि एक ओर उन्हें जो न्यूनतम प्रबंधकीय स्वतंत्रता है, वह दी जाए और दूसरी ओर उनका जो उत्तरदायित्व है इस सदन के प्रति और देश के प्रति, वह भी रखा जाए ।

इस दृष्टिकोण से देखते हुए विभाग जो हैं, वह कार्यवाही करते हैं--क्योंकि 207 प्रतिष्ठान हैं आज जो--तमाम विभाग के अन्तर्गत हैं और कोई ऐसा विभाग नहीं है कि जो सब को देखे और उसका स्थानान्तरण करे या नहीं करे ।

तो हर विभाग इस संबंध में अपने-अपने दायित्व का निर्वहन करने का प्रयास करता है और इस दृष्टिकोण से कार्य करता है ।

DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI: In his proposal to restore health to sick units, the Minister suggested a few means, and they are (1) to set up captive thermal plant; (2) to invest money for modernisation and (3) to set up a Research and Development Wing. May I know in how many cases of the sick textile mills under the N.T.C., these things have been done? Is it possible for a small concern to set up its own captive thermal plant? Has any experiment been made in this regard? I would request the hon. Minister to specifically say the number of sick textile mills where sickness has been reduced by these means under the Ministry.

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI: The hon. Member has mentioned about the textile mills and I would request for a notice because I am not dealing with that directly but I know that for individual sick units we have been allowing setting up of captive power generation capacity individually and that has been done on merit and they have even been

empowered to import diesel generating units if these are not available in the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

Spurious gas cylinders in circulation in the Capital

*2. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:
SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the *'Hindustan Times'* dated 20th March, 1986 wherein it has been stated that there are a number of spurious gas cylinders in circulation in the capital which can explode;

(b) whether it has also been stated therein that such spurious gas cylinders can cause a number of painful deaths; and

(c) if so, whether Government propose to enquire into the matter and if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR SINGH): (a) No such news item has appeared in the *'Hindustan Times'* of the 20th March, 1986.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK: Mr. Chairman, you have yourself heard the answer of the hon. Minister as "No such news item has appeared in the *"Hindustan Times"* of the 20th March, 1986". The Minister has taken shelter behind that. He is evading the answer intentionally. Mr. Chairman, I seek your protection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You ask your supplementary.

SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK: I seek your protection. If the Department or the Minister can hoodwisk us here—the chosen representatives of the people—you can imagine what is happening outside. Sir, this news item appeared in the 'Hindustan Times' on the 24th March. This is a very technical mistake. Instead of 24th, it might have been typed as 20th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I agree with you.

SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK: This is a very sensational news. It is playing with the lives of the people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put the question.

SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK: This is a big scandal. There is a big racket operating in LPG cylinders. People are selling these spurious gas cylinders at Rs. 150, whereas, we can purchase a cylinder at Rs. 550 or so. I would like to ask the hon. Minister specifically whether his department is in collusion with these people. When the officials discussed the question with the hon. Minister, ten or twelve days after this news item appeared, I would like to know whether they brought to his notice that this date is wrong and that the news item appeared on the 24th March. Or, I do not know whether he was also in collusion with the department.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR SINGH: Perhaps, the hon. Member has not taken proper care in putting the question properly. If he has given the date as 20th, instead of 24th, the answer cannot be anything but that there is no news report dated 20th. About department's collusion, the answer is in the negative.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will give you all an opportunity. Please wait. Let him put his second supplementary.

SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK: I would like to know from the hon. Minister specifically whether any such news item appeared in the 'Hindustan Times'

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†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Mukhtiar Singh Malik.